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EFFORT  
By Paul Nocquet



# BRUSH AND PENCIL

VOL. XVII

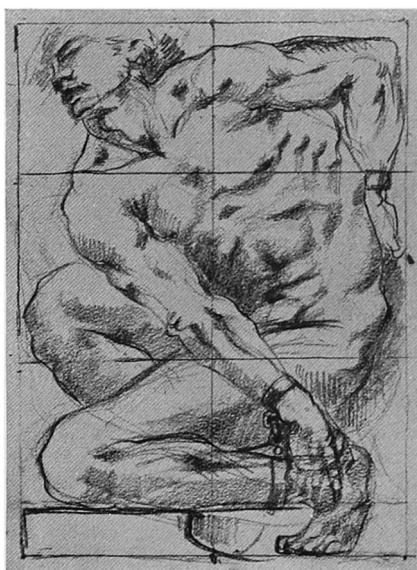
APRIL, 1906

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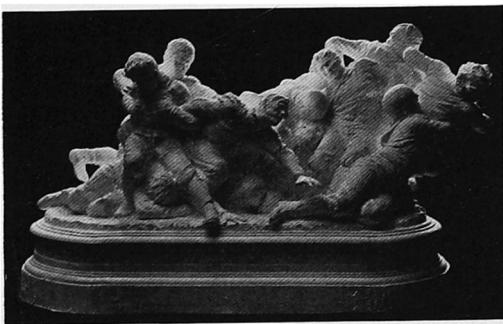
## THE ART OF PAUL NOCQUET

It is one of the truisms of common experience that the world's heretics — be they in art, in letters, in science, in religion, in government, in any field of human activity — are its most engaging characters; and it is the fact that Paul Nocquet, who met such a tragic death on the marshes of Great South Bay, Long Island, on April 4 last, was a sincere protestant against what to him were the dead or moribund conventions of opinion and practice, that vests his memory with such a deep and abiding interest. His life was militant. He was a radical, a devotee to an ambition, an enthusiast, willing to sacrifice everything for a cause, one of those rare spirits — be it said reverently — whose abilities were often misdirected and whose efforts all too frequently lacked fruition. His loss to art has aptly been styled a potential loss. His life-work was in the making, and his highest achievements remained in the plaster form of models. But these diminutive models are so instinct with vitality, power, the bigness that implies genius, that one laments for art's sake the fatal accident that stayed the sculptor's hand and cut short a future glorious career.

His intimate friend, Gutzon Borglum, voiced a general opinion when after the accident he said of Nocquet, "I am constrained to say that no temperament of like interest, so prolific in suggestion, so ready in expression, and so tenacious in prosecution, could easily be found among us. In his



FINISHED STUDY  
By Paul Nocquet



FOOTBALL GROUP  
By Paul Nocquet

professor, he was a trained craftsman. He was so primed with experience that life must have been pretty well lived out to have given time to relate it in. He had enjoyed the friendship of the foremost men of his profession in Europe, he had studied under Meunier and Lambeaux, and he had listened closely to the whisperings of Rodin's muse. He was like nearly every great man I have known — he could and did work terribly. His brain drove him to tasks the American can not understand, and yet he was always behind his own mark. He had a merry cynicism that caused him to play and scoff, and at once doubt and believe his own most sacred ideals. He knew his limitations, as he knew his power, and his only real heartache was one that must inevitably come to every man of genius, namely, that of the limitations of everything and chiefly of his own medium and ability. Hence the despair in his work.

"He was twenty-nine, and as youthful as he was at twenty; he had simply accumulated data, which proved rather material to play with than weighty truths to act as ballast. He was called eccentric because of this. He would fling to his company what everybody thought and none dared speak aloud. And yet I have never known him to drop an unsavory truth into any circle with the slightest malice aforethought. If Nocquet's remarks stirred to

profession, he was a trained craftsman. He was so primed with experience that life must have been pretty well lived out to have given time to relate it in. He had enjoyed the friendship of the foremost men of his profession in Europe, he had studied under Meunier and Lambeaux, and he had listened closely to the whisperings of Rodin's



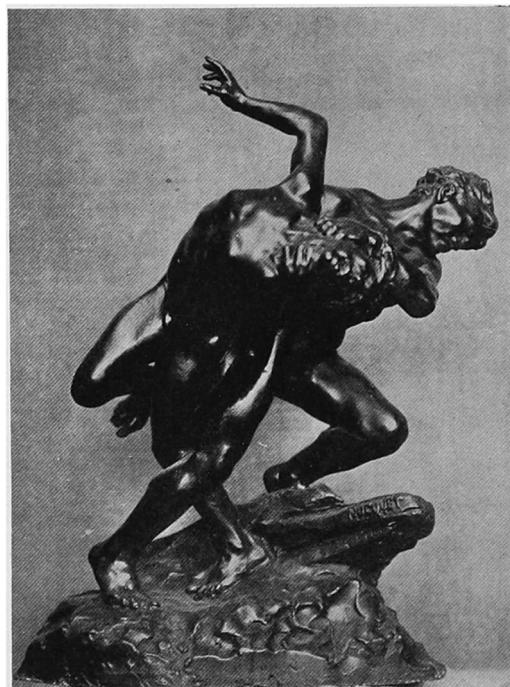
ROUGH STUDY  
By Paul Nocquet

anger the dregs of dull company, it was the unalterable truth of his thrust. His loss to all of us, to those even who approve him least, is very great. We need the stimulus of his viewpoint. Now that the old school of academic formulæ has lost all hold upon us—save the respect we render age—his stimulus would have proven a factor to American art we sorely need."

Energy, tension, effort, characterized the work of Nocquet, whether as sculptor, painter, or aeronaut. It was the spirit of his every-day life as well as his work. Whether in the group of slaves straining every muscle into relief beside a huge monolith, as in his greatest bronze, "Effort," or in the picturing of modern gladiators in the scrimmage of the football field—his bronze that recently was presented to Columbia University by Isaac N. Seligman—there was life in every stroke.

He himself was the type of his own clay figures, lithe, and yet of great strength. Venturesome by nature, aeronautics appealed to him as a limit in human daring in which he found exhilaration. He was one of the small circle in Paris who planned to cross the Atlantic in balloons years ago. They abandoned their plan for want of funds, but Nocquet lived from day to day in the determination to try the feat at some time.

A word may here be said of the pathos of the sculptor's fate. The very hour chosen for the fatal ascension bespoke the man's daring—one perhaps had better say foolhardiness. The day was waning to its close when he entered his car, and he was last seen at dusk. He, however, landed his balloon in safety on Jones's Beach, four miles south of Amity-



DEADLY STRUGGLE  
By Paul Nocquet

ville, on Great South Bay, and then lost his life after a six hours' battle with water and mud in the treacherous morass between the village and the sea. The lights of the village evidently attracted the balloonist,

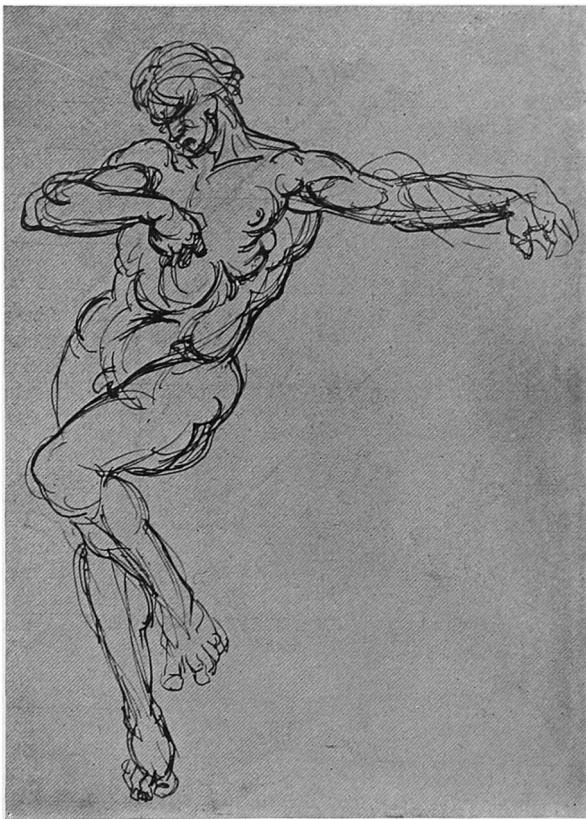


PEN DRAWING  
By Paul Nocquet

stranded in the darkness on a sand-pit and barely saved from a descent in the ocean, and he started on a journey which the most experienced of the native baymen would scarcely have undertaken.

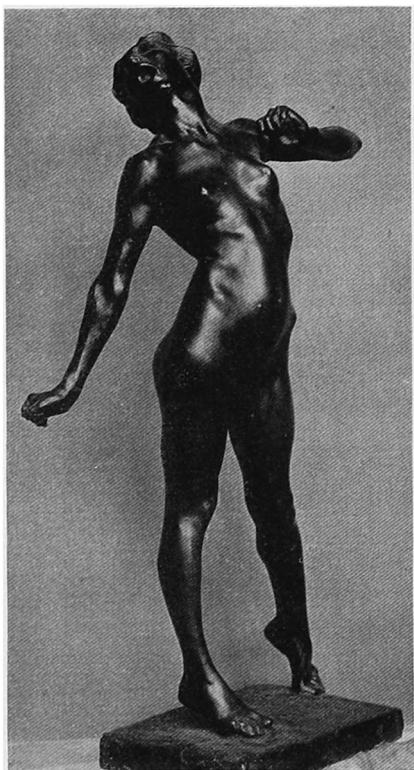
Within a mile of him on the smooth beach was the Life-Saving Station, but he was unaware of this, and though he shouted loudly for help and his

cries were heard in the night, no one came to guide him. His tragic journey across creeks and through marsh and mud, often sinking to his knees, and again swimming across broad pools, must have lasted from 10 o'clock



PEN DRAWING  
By Paul Nocquet

at night until 4 o'clock the following morning. At that hour he had crossed fourteen of the many little islands of the lagoon. His heavy overcoat, soaked with water, he discarded, and with scarce strength enough to stagger he plunged into the water to cross a stream 100 yards wide. His cork life-preserved kept him afloat, but when he had reached Cott's Island blindly he groped his way a few feet, then drank the last drops



WOMAN YAWNING  
By Paul Nocquet

Cursed," "Despair," "Endless Grief," and many another of the remarkable conceptions he put in plastic form. To many these would suggest a morbid feeling, a minor chord in his nature that made him prone to dwell on the gloomy side of life. Intimacy with the man, however, would have dispelled such a notion. He was essentially optimistic and cheerful, and the very buoyancy of his spirits impelled him to glorify the strenuous, to catch and record the moments of tense action, to depict in plastic guise the passions that stir men's souls.

His "Football Players" is perhaps the weakest of his works, being tame in conception and lacking the characteristics that mark the "modern Gladiators," as foot-ball players have been termed. But his other principal works — and it is a curious fact that they were shown at Gutzon Borglum's studio just a month to a day before he met his fate — have

of whisky in the small flask he carried on his ascension.

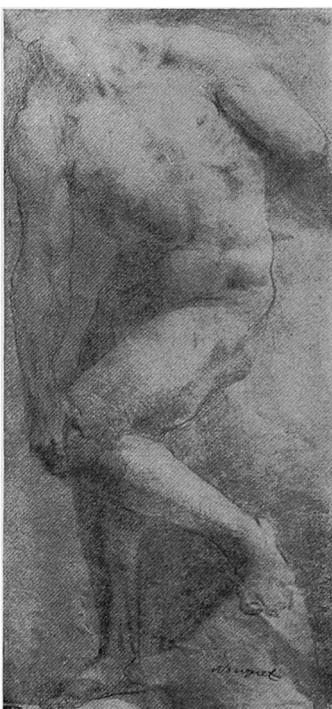
In vain he attempted to rise to his feet and plod on. Nature was exhausted and the spirits would not revive him. The dying man, apparently with a last despairing effort, flung the flask from him and sank on his face. They found his body on the fifteenth island, his hands crossed before his face and the empty flask only six feet away. Sad fate for such an heroic spirit!

Nocquet was an ardent disciple of Rodin and most of the work he left shows unmistakably the influence of his master. He had little sympathy with or use for the merely pretty — a female portrait, finely modeled, being practically his only extant work which relies for its interest primarily on beauty. The tragic, the forceful, the moment of passion or of stress made to him an appeal that dominated his energies. Witness his "Adultery," "Fierce Combat," "Effort," "Centaurs Struggling," "Le Penseur," "The

rarely been excelled for force and character. Rodin never expressed more truthfully a passion or a sentiment, nor did Meunier, that apostle of brutal unloveliness, ever depict more strikingly a hapless lot. Certainly neither had the grasp of action that was at Nocquet's command. Many of the seventy-odd pieces of sculpture left by the artist are unfinished suggestions; not a few are tentative and unconvincing; but most of them, miniatures though they be, bear unmistakably the stamp of the heroic — ideas too large, passions too great, lots too soul-touching to find adequate expression in a mantelpiece. Nocquet was born for big things, and the admirers of his genius will ever regret that his dreams and visions rarely got beyond the little plastic models in which he embodied them.

In conclusion a few biographical notes should be recorded. Nocquet was born in Brussels April 1, 1877. In the city of his birth he studied with Lambeaux and Meunier and won in 1900 in Brussels the competition for the Prix de Rome, but chose instead to study five years in Paris. In Paris he was a pupil of Antonin Mercie and of Gérôme and exhibited frequently at the Salon, becoming an associate of the Champs de Mars in 1902 and a member of the Société Nationale des Beaux Arts. He came to New York three years ago and won a place in the art life of the metropolis through his individuality. He was awarded a silver medal at the St. Louis Exposition and third place in the recent competition for the bronze doors for the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Nocquet left a mother, two sisters and a brother in Brussels, Belgium. To provide for the mother, whose sole support the artist was, a memorial exhibition and sale was promptly decided on, and it was the earnest wish of every friend of the dead artist when the step was taken on the initiative of Gutzon Borglum that enough would be realized from the sale of his effects to buy a handsome annuity for her. The prompt and decisive action on the part of the friends of the dead artist, in behalf of those nearest and dearest to him, was a touching tribute to him, and the practical form in which it was cast reflects credit on the projectors.

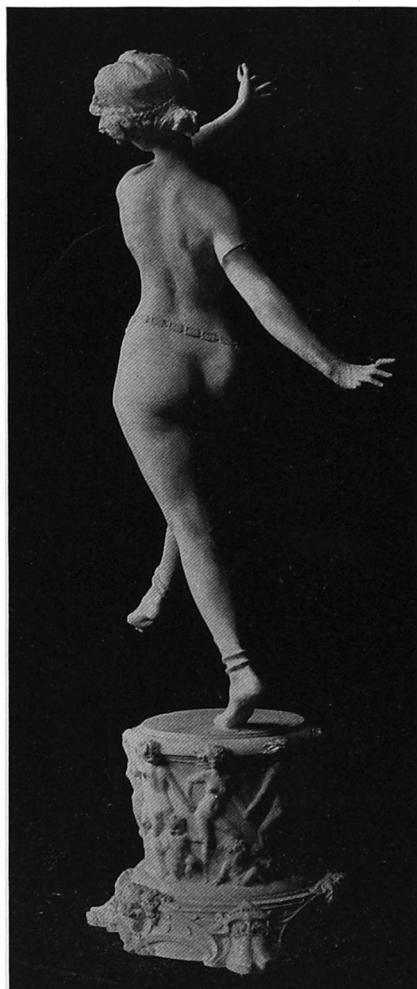
ARTHUR P. HOSFORD.



STUDY  
By Paul Nocquet

"March," Ellen G. Emmett's distinguished "Portrait of Mrs. G.," and John R. Koopman's "Dock Scene." In the west gallery Ellen G. Emmet had another capital portrait of Mrs. Mark Hanna; Jerome Myers had one of his East Side street scenes. In the Vanderbilt gallery there were another portrait of the wife of Howard G. Cushing, whom he has painted so often; a distinguished portrait of a boy in full length by Lydia Field Emmet, Samuel Halpert's "Night," J. Alden Weir's "Fur Pelisse," J. J. Shannon's "Ideal Head," and Abbott H. Thyer's "Winged Figure." Two of the more individual notes in the exhibition were a landscape, by Ernest Lawson, and W. Glacken's "Central Park—Winter."

The Ten American Painters have not always convinced visitors at their annual exhibitions that the principle of complete personal liberty, which was the avowed reason for their secession from the Society of American Artists, could be relied upon to secure a good show. But this year they more than justified expectations. Their collection of thirty-two paintings at the Montross gallery was one of the best they have assembled. If it contained nothing besides J. Alden Weir's portrait of "A Gentlewoman" and Edmund C. Tarbell's "A Girl Mending," the show would have been noteworthy. Mr. Weir's half-length study of a dark-haired young woman, resting her clasped hands on the corner of a table, is one of the very best of recent American portraits. The subject herself is not of



DANCING GIRL  
By Paul Nocquet

remarkable originality or distinction in type — since her name is not mentioned in the catalogue, it is permissible to remark that she is not beautiful, except in the oval shape of her face. But the painter left no doubt whatever



ADULTERY  
By Paul Nocquet

that she possesses an inherited tradition of good breeding. What she may have lacked, in absolute interest for the person not acquainted with her, Mr. Weir has himself contributed. The portrait will be one to see again, ten or twenty years hence, with genuine pleasure.

Tarbell's picture has elsewhere been commented on in *BRUSH AND PENCIL*, and the subject does not call for further discussion at this time.

Robert Reid's large panel, "The Gold Screen," is fatigued in design